DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 041 910 TE 001 970

AUTHOR Lorch, Thomas M.
TITLE Sensitivity Training and the Teaching of Humanities.
PUB DATE 69
NOTE 24p.; Unpublished manuscript

EDRS PRICE EDRS Price MF-$0.25 HC-$1.30
DESCRIPTORS Classroom Techniques, Dramatic Play, Dramatics, Group Discussion, *Humanities Instruction, Personal Growth, Personal Relationship, Personal Values, *Sensitivity Training, Student Alienation, Student Behavior, Student Experience, *Student Participation, Teacher Attitudes, Teacher Behavior, Teacher Participation, *Teaching Methods

ABSTRACT

Using methods derived from sensitivity training, teachers can help students to "feel involved" with works of art and make works "come alive for them." Current humanities instruction is said to be impersonal, overly intellectual, poorly taught, and irrelevant. Sensitivity training emphasizes the individual and his capacities for self-awareness; it attempts to rehabilitate the emotions as a way of knowing; and it emphasizes the individual's participation in a small group. As the student becomes aware of his own feelings, he becomes more sensitive to what he reads. In addition, through such training the teacher can become more sensitive to the atmosphere of the class and to the learning that takes place. Sensitivity techniques which are valuable in the classroom are (1) acting out the reading, (2) placing oneself in the position of someone else, (3) fantasy trips, (4) trials, (5) contemporizing to connect the work read with the present, and (6) drawing. When such techniques are used, students make discoveries about themselves through involvement with the questions raised in the readings examined. (LH)

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH, EDUCATION & WELFARE
OFFICE OF EDUCATION

THIS DOCUMENT HAS BEEN REPRODUCED EXACTLY AS RECEIVED FROM THE PERSON OR ORGANIZATION ORIGINATING IT. POINTS OF VIEW OR OPINIONS STATED DO NOT NECESSARILY REPRESENT OFFICIAL OFFICE OF EDUCATION POSITION OR POLICY.

Thomas M. Lorch
Department of English
University of Notre Dame
Notre Dame, Indiana

ED041910

Sensitivity Training and the Teaching of Humanities

I

The assignment is Hamlet: how am I to present the play to my students? I teach college undergraduates, both English and Great Books or Humanities Seminars, but the problems are similar in secondary school and in graduate school. I recall the ways the play was taught to me. I was told about Shakespeare's sources and the history of the text. I was shown recurrent images, structural arrangements, and thematic patterns. I heard the characters, particularly Hamlet, analyzed. I came to see the majesty of the play, and began to feel its poetry. I thought I "understood" it. I appreciated Shakespeare's achievement. But, I now realize, the play remained for me an object to be studied, a piece of material to be mastered with the help of certain information and techniques. I remained untouched, uninvolved. It was nice that such a thing existed, but it had nothing to do with me.

I decided that I would approach the play differently. At first I found myself trying to answer the students' questions by conveying an "understanding" of the play through structure and character analyses, but the discussion remained dry, disinterested and sterile. Then I told the students: "Imagine that you go back to your room and receive a phone call telling you that your father has been murdered. You go home, and somehow find yourself face to face with his murderer. What happens?" Immediately the whole atmosphere of the class changed. The students had been touched, I could see them looking deeply into themselves. One said that he would tear the murderer apart, killing

TE001050

him as slowly and painfully as possible. Another wanted to ask the murderer why he had done it. Several simply turned him over to the police. Two imagined they would turn away and cry hysterically. Most were appalled by the first student's violence, but had to recognize their own instinctive need to have revenge. Suddenly Hamlet was no longer an unreal fictional figure. They compared their reactions to his. They recognized him as a distinct person with a terrible human problem. I asked the students to act out several other situations which occur in the play: the father's attempt to keep the son at home when the son wants to leave, a brother's advice to his sister to avoid being seduced, a man's reactions to a girl and to close friends he believes have betrayed him, Hamlet and his mother. In these ways the points of meeting between them and the play were established; they came to know both themselves and the play better.

I had asked myself: "What do I want to achieve when I teach the play?" I had realized: "I want the play to come alive for them; I want them to feel involved with it. Only in this context will understanding and analysis of it become significant." After class I felt that I had found methods which were successful. I derived these methods from my experience in sensitivity training.

II

Every Freshman English instructor teaches the cardinal rule: know your audience; but in this case I find it impossible. I confess, however, that I have become accustomed to some hostile reactions at the mere mention of sensitivity training, and some resistance to my ideas about these methods of teaching. I am aware that these methods raise questions. To those who may be interested in experimenting with them, I wish to point out the difficulties I believe you will encounter and to suggest ways of dealing with them.

And to those who are skeptical, I wish to meet,or to acknowledge, the objections which do arise.

To begin: a class which employs methods derived from sensitivity training is not the same as a sensitivity group. Much uneasiness about groups arises out of misuses of the group format, usually by unqualified or untrained leaders, but there are real questions raised by what happens in groups, such as whether participants are not sometimes encouraged to go too far too fast. It has been my experience that the student knows instinctively how far he can go; if, for example, he is asked to take a fantasy trip to meet a monster and is not ready to do so, the monster will not appear in his fantasy. But it is essential that the student always know that he is free not to participate in any exercise the teacher may propose, and that he is free to proceed in his own way. Also, unlike certain groups, a class meets regularly over a long period of time in a congruent supportive context, one in which he has friends, other classes and faculty, even the resources of psychological services available to help him to integrate his experiences. Furthermore, Humanities classes at the same time consider specific readings; thus the student always has a point of comparison with his other experiences, and often engages in processes of interpretation and generalization which provide useful perspectives.

Students will, in many cases, be resistant to these methods of teaching; also, the older they are, the more resistant. And not only because this approach replaces expected procedures with the unfamiliar. Classes taught in this manner <u>are</u> threatening, in that they involve the student personally; they ask that he expose, or at least face, fundamental aspects of himself. Some of his customary defenses are taken away when the student is constantly

asked for his own personal responses, feelings as well as thoughts, to what he reads and to what he hears in class. Furthermore, when he is asked to examine his basic beliefs -- the ways he understands and relates to himself and others, to what he reads and experiences, to the world he lives in --, a great deal is at stake. Oftentimes one changes and grows only after discovering the inadequacies of his beliefs and responses, but even later growth does not make the initial discovery any less painful. Deep personal involvement leads to both opportunities and risks.

To acknowledge this is to begin, at least, to deal with it. Greater problems, and resistances, arise when the student has no understanding what he is signing up for. I have found it best to explain, insofar as is possible in advance, the intentions of the course, the methods I will be using, and the rationale underlying them. Perhaps such courses are not for everyone; it seems advisable to permit the student to choose whether or not to participate. (I, however, cannot help wanting to expose every student to such a course.) Even so some resistances will be present; yet once the students begin to grasp what can be done with these methods, it is surprising how quickly the resistances fade away.

But how am I to address my colleagues? First, I ask for what Coleridge calls a "willing suspension of disbelief." Secondly: I consider the manner of teaching which I am presenting as a supplement to presently existing effective, valid ways of teaching. Existing methods have certain aims and achieve them; I am suggesting that still other educational needs exist which should be met in the curriculum and that these needs require different methods. In advocating these methods here I am seeking to enrich and not replace the present structure of higher education (I will leave aside whether I would want to replace it). Thirdly: These methods of teaching are not for everyone.

Courses of this kind must be small in size, as are seminars (I personally find the maximum size seventeen to eighteen students). Not all professors find seminars congenial, and still fewer will be drawn to sensitivity training methods. Yet the professor who feels his own methods of teaching called into question by these proposals is in some sense right, at least insofar as my desire to find and promulgate them has grown out of my dissatisfactions with present methods. There are, fourthly, serious problems in contemporary higher education (excuse the cliché), problems which present teaching methods have helped to create; and I feel that methods derived from sensitivity training offer a way to correct at least some to the deficiencies. Yet, fifth and last, I also believe that there are sound theoretical bases for these methods which justify their use under any circumstances. I wish now to discuss these last two points in greater detail.

III

The problem of audience arises again as I begin to speak of the current problems in humanistic education. To me the terms have become commonplaces, even clichés, and can be stated quickly: higher education is impersonal, overly intellectual, poorly taught, and irrelevant. Professors pursue publication instead of teaching; they and the departments which employ them focus upon scholarship, specialization and advanced study to the neglect of the undergraduate. The learning process itself is rationalistic, objective, scientific, and therefore itself impersonal; education is conceived as the training of the intellect alone. The scientific method has largely taken over even the Humanities; insights not objectively, almost statistically demonstrable are suspect. The student takes numerous large lecture courses; he is asked to master the techniques, information and ideas given him by the professor and repeat these on his examinations. After taking an appropriate

number of these courses he receives his degree. The student goes through a seemingly artificial process, mechanically memorizing and solving irrelevant problems. He remains disinterested and detached from his classroom education. Q.E.D.

Sensitivity training is strong in precisely these areas of weakness. Sensitivity groups begin with the individual; they seek to develop his awareness of himself, his understanding of his own experience, and his capacities to experience. Sensitivity training also helps to rehabilitate the feelings, emotions, intuition and imagination, and to give these capacities their appropriate places alongside the more commonly recognized ways of knowing. The small group provides a context which communicates to the participant that he personally is important, and that his thoughts and feelings are of values. And sensitivity training also teaches the participant that he can learn from his own experience.

The methods of sensitivity training, therefore, offer an excellent means of bridging the gap between the student and his studies, or, to put it another way, of bringing about a fuller involvement of the student in his studies. No course which incorporates the principles of sensitivity training will remain impersonal; it will be constantly aware of where the student is and incorporate his feelings, ideas, and experiences into its methods of learning. After all, the student is there; and far more use of his own unique resources can be made in the classroom. I feel certain that courses adapting this methodology can be developed in every Humanities discipline. A sociology course, for example, could be organized to make use of the student's present and past social experience, a psychology course so that the student can employ his own personality as a test of various theories of personality, and an ethics course in such a way that the student becomes aware of and

develops his own ethics at the same time that he reads other ethical theories. Once the student becomes involved both in the classroom and in the materials being studied, it is my thesis and my experience that he becomes both more interested and more perceptive.

What I am advocating, of course, is a full interaction between the student and what he studies. Yet in saying this I have ceased describing a method of teaching which offers a solution to a specific problem and have begun to speak of a method valid in its own right.

A brief degression is necessary at this point. Up until this time I have used the term 'Humanities' loosely, as interchangeable with the Liberal Arts including the Social Sciences. In my title, however, my intention was to use the term in a narrower sense, to the exclusion of the social sciences; the teaching problems are significantly different in the latter areas. The Humanities subjects, then, are English, Philosophy, Theology, Great Books (interdisciplinary) courses, the literatures of modern and classical languages, the Fine Arts, and perhaps history. Henceforth I will use the term 'Humanities' in the narrower, restricted sense.

The theoretical bases, then. Underlying the use of senstitivity training methods in teaching the Humanities is the thesis that a full interaction between the learner and the materials being studied will lead to both the education of the student and the advancement of knowledge about the materials. The aim of such interaction, the release of all facets and forces in the materials, and of all the student's capacities to respond and learn, presupposes that development on one side will naturally result in development on the other. There is nothing revolutionary or new in this thesis, but the current neglect of the learner's role in the learning process justifies a strong restatement of it, particularly in terms of the student's role. The

student's overall personal growth, clearly, increases his capacities to learn. The result is an educational cycle. The more sensitive and self-aware the student becomes, the more he will discover in the materials he is studying; then in turn the new knowledge he has found will lead to further increases in sensitivity, self-awareness and personal growth: and so on. Like the distinction between form and content in literature, the opposition between emphasis on content or on the student turns out to be a false one: the two are inseparable. Learning presupposes a learner; in fact, learning is necessarily proportionate to the development of the learner. The better one comes to know and understands himself, the better he will understand what he reads and studies, and visa versa.

The full interaction between the student and what he reads is particularly appropriate and necessary in the core Humanities subjects. We have come to expect that works of literature (and the arts) will have strong imaginative dimensions, but we are less prepared, even conditioned not to recognize that works of philosophy, theology and the Great Books contain strong emotional, personal, even imaginative forces in addition to -- or, better, fused with -- their intellectual content. In reading, for example, Lucretius, Descartes, Camus, or Kierkegaard, we meet a distinct personality expressing strong feelings along with his arguments, and we respond to both the emotions and the ideas. These as well as the other dimensions of the humanistic works must be recognized in order to achieve a full understanding of them.

From the other side: the student has feelings, emotions, intuition, imagination as well as reason and intellect, and as he reads he is responding with all of these capacities. Although the former are more difficult to handle, they as well as the latter contribute to the student's understanding of what he reads. It seems worthwhile, therefore, also to recognize and

develop these ways of knowing.

Furthermore, once we recognize that in reading a book we are meeting another person, the author, we can come to see from another perspective the connection between coming to know ourselves and others, and reading books. Oftentimes a fictional character or writer seems more "real" to us than people we know; I personally feel that people wear masks and play roles to such an extent that the distinction between "real" and fictional characters breaks down. Thus, in discussing a work, it is as if there is an extra person, the author, present, with whom we also interact. In order to understand a work, we must try in some sense to place ourselves inside the author's mind, just as in responding to another person we speak of placing ourselves in his shoes. The more sensitive a person becomes to himself and others, the more sensitively he will read, and conversely; the more sensitively he reads, the more aware of himself and others he will become.

IV

I will now delineate the specific methods from sensitivity training which can enrich the teaching of Humanities. These can be divided artificially according to the distinction which has already appeared: first in terms of knowing the student and then in terms of studying the works being read. I will discuss each and their interaction briefly, and then go on to describe a number of specific techniques I have used to teach individual works.

Sensitivity training enables the participant to become more sensitive to himself and others, to become aware of how he relates to others, and to learn about the intereations which take place in small groups: all of which is obviously useful to the teacher. I have found that I am more effective when I am aware of my own feelings and moods of the moment as well as my responses to my students

students and to what is being read. Furthermore, in my seminars I am constantly listening to my students, and I also find that when I hear their feelings as well as their ideas and either sense or discover by questions the nature of their own personal involvement in what they are saying, both more personal growth and more understanding of the work being discussed emerge. Oftentimes a student reads his own preoccupations into a work; when I become aware of this, I can usually show the student something about both the work and himself. The teacher who is aware of hurt feelings, reticences, and conflicts among his students can bring them into the open and deal with them. He also can bring about an interaction between the members of the class which enables each member to contribute to the learning of all; it is a rewarding moment when students start talking to each other and stop talking to me. A teacher sensitive to the atmosphere of his class also comes to know when the students are involved and learning is taking place. In these and similar ways sensitivity training directly enriches classroom teaching.

In addition, the techniques used in sensitivity training offer unique ways of studying the works read in humanities courses. Often in sensitivity groups the participant is asked to be aware of his feelings about others; in approaching a work according to the principles of sensitivity training, by analogy, the student is asked to be aware of his feeling responses to what he reads. I often begin consideration of a work by asking the students what feelings it aroused in them; in this way I discover where they are and how they are involved in the work; I have found that I can move from this starting point into a searching consideration of the work and their relation to it. Most literature teachers, I believe, presuppose that the student experiences his own emotional responses when he reads a work before class,

but I think they are overly optimistic. The student knows that there is a "right" way to respond to an assignment before he reads it; particularly the Bible and Shakespeare, but also any classic or Great Book, even any book worthy of being assigned, are to be revered, appreciated, and analyzed. Anger, irritation, disagreement, indifference, harsh judgments are not ligitimate responses. A student cannot be taught how to respond, but he can be shown that he does respond, and encouraged to value his response. I try to accept each response and together with the student find the ways it illuminates the work; in this way I hope he will come to discover his own unique creativity and insights.

My aim in using the techniques to be described shortly is to bring out the student's total responses, his feelings as well as his ideas, to what he reads; and further, to develop his capacities to respond as fully as possible. The techniques also serve to circumvent the predetermined stock responses which the student thinks his teacher (his parents, his society, his peers) expect, responses which can both defend him from the work and act as obstacles which prevent his reading it. These techniques are intended to free the student to confront directly the work and his own interaction with it.

Of course the direct group experience and the use of group methods to approach works interact constantly. The subject is <u>The Communist Manifesto</u>. One student is trying to convince another that the competitive urge inherent in human nature dooms the classless society. He is using techniques of cross-examination to badger and entrap his opponent into submission. He is competing for the acceptance of competition. Another student responds constantly with rational logic and common sense to every highly emotional situation in class and in the readings, until the class (and I) rise in protest. "Nobody acts like that," we tell him; "That isn't human." He becomes even more logical and seemingly without feeling. "I'm very human," he protests in his

journal; "why is thinking the way I do wrong?" A slight hostility emerges now whenever he speaks in class; an impasse has resulted which has not yet been resolved. In the classroom situation, the student himself and his responses to the readings are inseparable. The total interaction, at least in most cases, leads to learning and personal growth.

V

Actual classes. Of course rarely do they go according to plan. Questions and issues arise, and the discussions whirl. The works are analyzed, principles and theories argued. In numerous instances I employ no devices or techniques. Yet, I feel that the influence of sensitivity training constantly makes itself felt, in an atmosphere of openness, personal involvement and excitement in the classroom. The two courses in which I have been experimenting with these methods are general Humanities or Great Books seminars of sixteen students, one a voluntary freshman program of my own creation, and the other a longstanding required program for all juniors in the College of Arts and Letters at Notre Dame. In what follows I hope to suggest some of the techniques which can be used, and to communicate a sense of what happens in classes taught in this way.

A. Six Techniques

1. Acting out.

The topic is the Fall of Man, Genesis 2-3. Students volunteer to take the parts of Adam, Eve, the Serpent and God, and enact the scene. Some find that they wish to act the role differently than their classmate, so that several play each role. One Eve reacts, "I've sinned, and it feels awful. Please help me, Adam, help me somehow." Another hides her act and attempts to seduce him, a third asks him to join her on the basis of their marriage bond. Still another Eve, previously

a considerate dependable person, emerges as a pushy, dissatisfied, demanding bitch. One Adam is cold and hard, and will not be tempted; another is immediately dissatisfied with paradise and himself drawn to the apple: he and his Eve have no need of the serpent. The serpents for the most part argue dogmatically; they show little sense of either sensuality or aspiration. One God is righteously indignant, another wants to destroy mankind, but others are bewildered and cannot justify what they've done. The entire class became involved; they were surprised to find that the Bible came alive.

Abraham and Isaac, Genesis 22. Again the students enacted the parts, this time spontaneously miming the physical actions, building the fire, tying Isaac's hands, raising the knife. Beneath a laughing playfulness, strong emotions developed. The first time the student who had asked to play the angel of God (he reminded me that there was such a part) rushed in to intervene before Abraham and Isaac reached the crucial moment; in discussion later he realized that he, like others, did not want to face that moment. The students asked to play it again, this time completing the killing. "Isaac" recognized his father's distress, the father decided to lie; the love between them emerged. Even after being "killed" Isaac trusted her father, but Abraham felt a dead emptiness. "God" felt awful; he could not justify himself. An atmosphere of awe and reverence enveloped the class; the deepest feelings had been touched. We were all brought face to face with our capacities to trust and believe.

Saint Augustine's Confessions follows Plato's Euthyphro in the syllabus; a somewhat different type of role-playing brought out the relationship between the two readings. One student played Socrates, another Augustine, and the two discussed piety, the nature of God,

religious belief; the students themselves determined the topics. We realized that we had to understand the two men well, almost get inside their minds, in order to play them; we also discovered, by trying to defend them, that Augustine's positions are indefensible on rational grounds. An entirely different result occurred when I asked them to play Socrates and Euthyphro. Euthyphro is simply too unsympathetic, too stupid, for anyone to take his part. Thus the suggested exercise led us to see something about the literary method and merit of the dialogue.

2. Place oneself within a work.

The Gospel of Saint Mark poses perhaps the more difficult problems of predetermined prejudices and responses. Particularly at a Catholic school the students know what they are supposed to say about Jesus and how they are supposed to relate to Him. But what is their actual response to Him? I asked each to imagine that he was Matthew when Jesus called him, that he was Peter when Jesus called him; I read the brief passages. Most could not visualize Jesus at all. A few could see his eyes; these begin to feel the call, and for them it was a profound experience. I asked that they be Peter denying Jesus; this they identified with more easily, some acting out of fear, others out of disillusionment, many coming to understand and sympathize with Peter for the first time. Lastly I asked them to enter into the healing of the paralytic, first as the paralytic, then as Jesus. Most had difficulty even identifying with the paralytic, and could not become Jesus at all; for them Jesus is not a human being with whom they can identify.

<u>Oedipus Rex</u>. The students could not understand why Oedipus blinds himself. I asked them to place themselves in Oedipus's situation, but -- for obvious reasons -- this remained quite distant; most felt he did

nothing wrong. I then asked them to imagine themselves in a similar situation: they have done something wrong unintentionally; what will they do about it? I asked them to imagine what their reaction would be if a child darted out in front of a car they were driving and was killed. Some felt they had done nothing wrong, others felt terribly guilty; some felt the need to make restitution or atonement, others did not. But Oedipus's situation became real.

3. Fantasy trips.

The topic is William Blake's Songs of Innocence and of Experience. I had asked each to choose innocence or experience, and the discussion had gone on at some length. In the one there is a poem entitled "The Lamb," the corresponding poem in the other is entitled "The Tyger." I asked the students to imagine a field in their minds, to place a lamb and a tiger in it, to allow the two to come together, and to watch what happened. Three saw the tiger eat the lamb, but an equal number, including a student who had argued strongly for the state of experience, saw the lamb walk right over the tiger. In several cases the two never met, at most looked at each other. One student envisioned the two getting married, another saw them yoked together as a matched team.

The Epic of Gilgamesh follows the usual pattern of a myth in which the hero journeys into the forest to fight and kill a monster. I asked the students to take this journey in fantasy, to meet the monster, see what he looked like, and see what happened. In this freshman class the students followed the text quite closely, although several never met the monster. Many of those who met and killed the monster, however, felt considerable guilt, a guilt which derived from themselves and not from the text. Dante's Inferno begins in a similar way, with a forest

journey which culminates in a confrontation with three monsters; but a guide arrives who helps Dante avoid them. The juniors who took this journey in fantasy experienced more varied and exciting trips, ranging from death and lonely terror to discoveries of help and beauty.

Questions have occasionally arisen in my mind about the educational value of these experiences. After each fantasy trip, in fact after virtually every exercise, we discuss the experience; but I make no effort to interpret each individual fantasy or even to articulate the connections between the fantasies and the works. Having been trained as a verbal rationalist, I still feel some uneasiness about experiential learning; but I find I believe in it. I might add that my students believe in it also.

As part of our consideration of Don Quixote, we attempted a group fantasy; I offered the students any enchantment or magic they might wish, initiated the fantasy myself, and began to pass it around the room. They plunged in with enthusiasm, but what emerged was, instead of a picaresque story, a series of disconnected images in which each student expressed his difficulties of the moment, what he wanted for himself, and what he wanted to give to others: sunny beaches, rich love, a fulfilling education, and so on. Our imaginations proved somewhat limited, but our sharing concluded the class with a feeling of joy and love.

4. Trials.

In another class on Oedipus Rex, we placed Oedipus on trial, with the students choosing either to be Oedipus, the prosecutors, the defenders or the judges. Most everyone, including some who had spoken only rarely in the past, became wholly involved; the defenders are still angry about the guilty verdict six months later. The trial format permitted them

to express different aspects of themselves: for example, their commitment to fairness and justice, their competitiveness, or their sense of being persecuted. They ransacked the play for evidence to support their positions, and thus came to know it better than they might have otherwise.

In studying Bernard Shaw's Saint Joan, we constructed a parallel trial. Students had recently disrupted CIA interviews at Notre Dame; the situations were particularly comparable because in each case prosecution came from both church and state, and in each case there were legitimate and questionable positions on all sides of the question. The risk in employing contemporary parallels is that the discussion will bog down in the issue itself. Many of us, including me, did become very heated. But the others, who found that they had chosen to act as observers, told us what they saw happening: that no one who spoke listened to anyone else, or showed any willingness to alter his views. We were much chastened, and learned something of the difficulties of rational discourse.

5. Contemporizing.

The example above is but one of many efforts to connect the work read with the present, in order to reveal its relevance and bring it alive to the students. Mayor Daly has been a controversial figure in one class: in studying our first Platonic dialogue, the Euthyphro, I suggested that we use the Socratic method on the Mayor, and students volunteered to play him. Again the discussion tended to degenerate into a shouting match, but in this case I repeatedly demanded that we adhere to the Socratic method: we discovered how difficult it is to use.

The students' response to St. Augustine's Confessions was irritation: they felt Augustine was excessively self-critical, too preoccupied with sin and sex. I asked everyone to write down on a piece of paper the most serious sin he had committed or could think of; over half were sexual. I then asked that each person think of one adjective to describe himself, and that he decide whether he would rather hear the others say something critical or something complimentary about him; the adjectives ranged from ambiguous to critical, and all chose to be criticized. I had no intention of carrying out this exercise, but one student asked to receive the others' comments. This immediately resulted in a great tension in the class. I pointed out that each of them was free not to participate, either in giving or receiving adjectives, but that those who wanted to do so should be free also. Three volunteered, and the exercise was performed, though in a restrained, stilted manner. The students found it very threatening and difficult to say something critical about someone else.

John Donne's poetry generated little interest, but I had also asked them to bring in their favorite contemporary songs. It came as quite a surprise to them to discover that both dealt with many of the same subjects, Donne often in a superior manner. No one shared the interest I had in contemporary versions of Don Quixote and Hamlet (Hamlet as leftist hippie draft resistor), although Machiavelli's Prince as a guide for the modern corporation or university president held some appeal. But one question generated by the death of Socrates -- is anything worth dying for? -- stimulated an hour's searching discussion.

6. Drawing.

During our discussion of A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man

a student said, "the artist obviously has an idea in mind when he sits down to create." I told them to take out a piece of paper, draw a line, draw a second line, draw a third line, and connect them; we then passed around the sixteen pictures. We discussed the different emotional impressions which they conveyed, and also recognized that the pictures were expressions of the artist's personality.

I began our first class on Moby Dick by asking that we express our feelings about the novel in a crayon drawing. The students did not know how to talk about the drawings, but I found them significant statements about the students themselves and their responses to the book. One or two asked immediately to do another; I asked them to draw the white whale. Again there was little talk, but these pictures showed considerable insight and were immensely powerful. We quite naturally began to discuss the whale. One student was deeply involved; he then played the role of the whale, and others took the parts of the hunters. Three hours had passed.

B. Discoveries.

1. One of the two crucial actions in Sir Gawain and the Green Knight is Gawain's refusal to be seduced by his host's beautiful wife. I asked the class to act out this situation. They refused. The atmosphere was strained and tense, but some discussion followed; they felt that the situation was too explosive to explore. Yet the discussion of the exercise became another way of exploring the situation: having to confront the suggested exercise was in itself an experience. Classes sometimes do not accept a proposed exercise, but in most cases there is something to be learned from the rejection.

2. Aristotle's Ethics raises the question, what is moral behavior. In discussing the work I sought to discover the moral issues which involved them, but the discussion remained superficial. It happened that I had begun that particular class by pausing to review the ways in which the classes had proceeded up until this point, and one student had reacted vehemently, almost to the point of tears, to the ways in which he felt students had been insulted, ridiculed, and hurt. No one had admitted that he had been hurt, but each agreed that he resented it when others were hurt. Only later did I make the connection. The moral issue to discuss was the way in which we treated each other; we had the opportunity to discover the moral code we were actually practicing and, if we wished, seek to improve upon it in the actual immediate situation. What happens in the class itself provides the best material for any exploration.

3. The Oresteia demonstrates the destructive effects of violence, particularly violence as a means of eliminating private or public evils. I developed a series of exercises to reveal this point. The exercises remained mechanical. Exercises to prove a point do not work; those exercises are best which bring about unique experiences for each participant or pose questions to which there are no known answers or no answers at all.

4. In the Enchiridion Epictetus teaches that the individual should concern himself only with what is within his power, with what is within him rather than what is outside. But his argument presupposes that the individual knows what comes from within and what from without. We spent the entire class period seeking to arrive at this knowledge (naturally without success). We did not, therefore, discuss the text itself. No

is this the only such instance. In some cases the book assigned proves of little value, perhaps serving only to provide a point of departure or topic of discussion.

C. Three classes.

1. Pascal's Pensees

The discussion dragged. I asked them directly what the problem was. They gradually admitted they were wholly uninterested in Pascal; he was distant and dead. Then a sudden transformation occurred; the whole class became immersed in a heated discussion about the existence of God and the afterlife which lasted for an hour and a half without my saying a word. Only later, after replaying the tape recording of the class, did I discover that it had all begun when a student had asked, "how would it effect your life if there were no Hell, or no God?" They shouted, snorted, groaned, used sarcasm; several tried to talk at once; two and three conversation broke out simultaneously. And although Pascal was never once mentioned, they raised precisely the questions and problems Pascal had discussed, and even used the very arguments he had advanced in support of their points. At the end they became a little nervous -- after all, this wasn't what you were supposed to do in class-- and looked at me, but when I gave them ten minutes to talk about the experience they quickly continued the discussion.

In this class personal involvement and consideration of content fused together. This fusion has now become characteristic of this particular class of freshmen. With rare exceptions, they no longer say anything in which they are not involved. Similar discussions, ones in which they became immersed in the issues of the book and their involvement

with them, occurred, for example, about The Communist Manifesto, The Myth of Sisyphus, and Waiting for Godot.

2. Plato's Symposium.

The topic of the Symposium is love. But Plato cannot define it, he can only dramatize one person loving another. I then asked the class to hold its own symposium on love. One girl quickly raised the issue of parental love. The students were quite open about their relationships with their parents, but the discussion focused more on the question of passing on ethical values than upon the love relationships. I asked them if they felt that their parents loved them and they answered yes ("they mistreat me, they don't understand or accept me, but they love me"); it appeared important to them to believe this. I then asked if they loved their parents, and they were afraid to explore the question.

I asked them to choose partners. They refused. I then asked them to choose in their minds. "Did the boys choose girls and the girls boys?" (this class is co-ed). Most did, but by no means all. Neither here nor throughout the period would the class discuss erotic love.

They quickly turned to self-love. I now asked this group to choose one adjective to describe themselves; this proved very hard and very moving, and most adjectives were critical. I asked them to think of something nice about themselves, and they laughed uneasily; but they had no difficulty in thinking of something critical. I then asked for volunteers to permit the others to say nice things about them. "Or something critical," someone suggested. "Or whatever comes spontaneously to mind." Almost everyone, including me, volunteered; most chose to receive spontaneous comments, although four chose to be criticized. The

rest of the class was spent in giving and receiving adjectives.

3. Goethe's Faust.

I began class by asking them what they wanted to talk about. The discussion settled first on Faust's pact with the Devil. Two students then acted out Mephistopheles' efforts to convince Faust to sell his soul. A rather hostile, cynical student found his role in playing Mephistopheles, but the student who played Faust remained within a Christian framework quite different from Faust's and refused to enter into the wager. The discussion then turned to Faust's constant striving and continued dissatisfaction, and to how it is possible to be happy. We discovered that happiness is impossible without unhappiness, and that one is not conscious of being happy: with awareness comes the realization that there are deficiencies and that there could always be more; the moment is lost and one moves on. One girl then shared with us that she is happy; the reactions were surprise, awe, shock, and irritation, and some tried to take it away from her; but it was a beautiful revelation to see someone truly joyous.

We then discussed Faust's relation with Gretchen. "But what is love?" someone asked. "I don't intend to define it abstractly," I replied. "Why not?" a number asked, and to my surprise we began to develop an understanding of love, but by incorporating feelings and personal experience. The discussion became a confrontation between a boy and a girl, the boy asking how you can be sure there is love, for permanence, for guarantees, and the girl saying that love simply is, beyond reasons and articulation. The boy got mad and called her condescending. The tension rose. The class wanted to move on, but I asked the two to work it through, and they did get beyond the hostility.

I asked for two to act out Faust and Gretchen's relationship; the same boy volunteered and asked the girl to join him. In this way they continued their dialogue, he being very much himself, but she retreating into her role. Several others were very much involved, some angry, some upset, some chastened by self-discovery. They shared their involvements, and class ended.

VI

It remains only to say a few words about the practical means of making such teaching a reality. In order to introduce these methods into the curriculum, it is necessary that teachers be trained to teach in this manner and that courses be developed which provide a context for such teaching. These courses will consist of readings which lend themselves to such explorations, accompanied perhaps by "lesson plans" which suggest possible techniques which can be used to approach the readings in the classroom. Those who are interested in using these methods will need, first of all, some experience in sensitivity training groups; they can then be introduced to the teaching techniques which have been developed and given opportunities to try them out. At the present time, I envision four-week summer institutes which offer such a program.

I have developed a course suited to these methods which is presently in operation at Notre Dame. I can think of a number of courses, both new and presently existing, which are well adapted to their use. This kind of teaching can become a reality. And needless to say, I am convinced that teaching methods derived from sensitivity training have a significant contribution to make to higher education.